

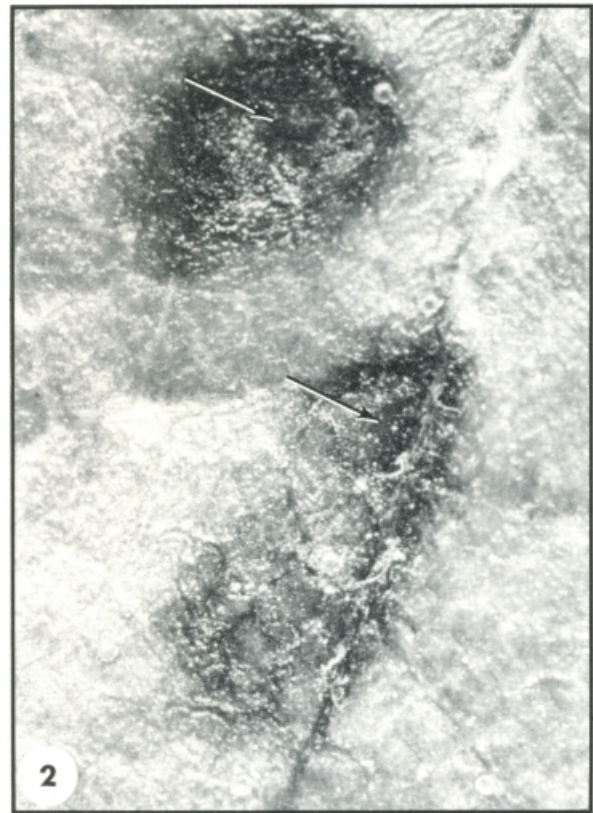
SEPTORIA LEAF SPOT OF WAX MYRTLE

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Wax myrtle (*Myrica cerifera* L.), also known as southern bayberry, is an evergreen dioecious shrub or small tree native to Florida, useful as a specimen tree, in hedges, and in screen plantings. Aromatic, blue-gray wax-covered berries on the female plants can be used to manufacture bayberry candles (4). Wax myrtle has moderate to good salt tolerance (1), and will grow in both well and poorly drained soils in full sun to partial shade. Since attractive foliage is a key feature of its ornamental value, leaf spots are particularly noticeable on wax myrtle. *Septoria myricae* Ell. & Ev. is one of several frequently encountered leaf spot pathogens of wax myrtle both in natural stands and in cultivation.

**SYMPTOMS AND SIGNS**

Septoria leaf spot of wax myrtle is characterized by circular 1-3 mm diameter brownish black lesions surrounded by a dark maroon border (Fig. 1). If spots are numerous, they may coalesce to form larger necrotic areas. Spots are visible from both sides of the leaf. Leaf spots associated with or caused by other fungi (i.e. *Cercospora* sp., *Phyllosticta myricae*, and *Gloeosporium elasticum*) can appear remarkably similar to spots caused by *Septoria*; therefore, microscopic examination and laboratory isolation would be required to differentiate these fungi. Close examination of leaf spots at 10-20X may reveal slightly raised black bumps (pycnidia) sparsely distributed within the necrotic tissue, though these fruiting bodies of *Septoria* on wax myrtle can be difficult to detect even for trained pathologists (2) (Fig. 2).



**Fig. 1.** Septoria leaf spot on wax myrtle. Spots are initially 1-3 mm across, brownish black with a maroon border. Spots can enlarge and coalesce.

**Fig. 2.** Fruiting bodies (pycnidia) are contained in slightly raised black bumps (arrow) scattered widely within necrotic spots. These fruiting bodies are difficult to detect without a microscope. (12x)

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### DISEASE DEVELOPMENT

Spores (conidia) of Septoria are produced in a slimy matrix inside the pycnidium and are exuded during wet weather. The conidia are disseminated primarily by rain splash, but movement might also be assisted by wind on wet days. No information is available concerning conditions favorable for development of Septoria leaf spot on wax myrtle other than the wet conditions presumed to be required for spore dispersal and infection. DPI plant disease records indicate Septoria leaf spot on wax myrtle can be detected year round.

### CONTROL

Where practical, take measures to reduce leaf wetting by pruning and spacing plants to permit good air movement. Time irrigation to allow quick drying of foliage. No fungicides are specifically labelled for use on Myrica, but broad crop clearance labeling on benomyl and basic copper sulfate allows use of these fungicides on shrubs and trees for general leaf spot control (3).

### SURVEY

Look for small dark brownish-black leaf spots with maroon borders. Spots may coalesce. Many leaf spot diseases on Myrica display similar symptoms, and fruiting bodies of the different leaf spot pathogens of Myrica are usually difficult to detect and differentiate without a microscope.

### LITERATURE CITED

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